NEW TARGETS FOR OUR NATION

Delivered at Woodford Square on April 12th.

● by James Millette

When we decided to come here today I had no doubt myself that we were going to have a very lively get-together. Perhaps I didn't believe it would be as lively as this but in any case I am very sure that the meeting which we are having this evening will be of great benefit to us all.

Lately, it has seemed to me that a number of very interesting developments have been taking place. Among these developments have been the rise of a Black Power movement in Trinidad and Tobago which, over the last few weeks, has given rise to a great deal of commotion in the society and which has created a situation which I believe we need to analyse. Whether we analyse it as a political party, or whether we analyse it as human beings coming together to talk about an existing situation, I think it is important for us to realize, first of all, that we are probably at the crossroads of the development of politics in this society. As I understand it, it seems today that in Trinidad and Tobago there are two fundamental views of how this society should be managed. On the one hand, I believe that it is clear that there are very many of us who feel that the end of organised politics is perhaps long overdue. There are many of us on the other side who feel that organised politics in this country is perhaps about to begin, because we feel that the problems which we are facing today are problems which have arisen very largely as a result of the fact that too many of us in the past have been completely outside the political system. The people who this evening, for example, are indicating their own displeasure about politics and about the organised political system of the country are people who, no doubt, feel that in the past they have had too little to do with the politics of Trinidad and Tobago: and indeed this is so. The important question for us to ask ourselves is: What do we do now that we recognise what the situation is and what the problem happens to be? It seems to me that, first of all, if we are going to understand what we are to do and how we are to do it, we have to understand where we have come from and how we happen to have arrived at the particular situation in which we happen to be.

ORIGINS

We have arrived in this position, my friends, over a very long passage and over a very long period of time, and if you will permit me I want to take you back to Columbus, not because I want to discover the West Indies with him, but because I want to make one partucular point; and the particular point which I wish to make is that since the West Indies have, as we have been told, been discovered', we have had imprinted upon this society the mark of external societies In other words, the imprint on the society of the West Indies has been a foreign imprint

We are very much concerned today with removing that imprint, the imprint of Columbus, who in his time performed his own historic function which was to give to this society a specific European character. He came here and what he saw he renamed completely after images and after persons and after institutions from the society from which he had come and he told us that Trinidad, for example, was to be named after the Trinity; that Antigua, that Guadeloupe and all the other islands of the West Indies were to be named after images and ideas which he had brought to this part of the world with him. In fact people who have come since Columbus have also been very much concerned with emphasizing the need to see the West Indies in terms of the views that Europeans have developed about our society. So that, we who have fallen into the same trap are very much concerned today with erasing the image which we as West Indians have had of ourselves. One of the most important aspects of this problem of identity in the West Indies is that we have come to recognise black as connoting some kind of denigration. The ordinary black people of the West Indies today suffer from a number of disabilities. One of the disabilities from which they suffer is that the system from which they are bred has taught them to denigrate themselves. That system has not only taught them to denigrate themselves; it has in fact created a basic inequality between black people in the West Indies and other people in the West Indies. Now this is particularly distressing because in this society of ours blacks are in the majority and whites are in the minority. Not only are they in a majority in this society but also in the world society and yet when we think in terms of the plight of black people these days we have to think in terms of the specific unfortunate circumstances pertaining to black people in the West Indies and also of the general unfortunate circumstances pertaining to black people everywhere.

It is of course very well known that black people in Africa and Asia, for instance, have had a completely different kind of experience from white people in those societies. In Black Africa today, there exists in Rhodesia - there exists too in South Africa - as there exists to some extent in other parts of the world also, a very clear indication of the degree to which black people are held in contempt.

BLACKNESS

But however important this problem of blackness may be ours is not only a problem of blackness. The problem is also a problem of the kind of economic system which we have been operating. That system is a system which has been characterised by two specific developments. One of these pertains to the emergence of what is very largely a European world, that is to say a world in which Europeans have been masters and non-Europeans have been the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. Also we have to reckon with the fact that in the West Indies in particular certain circumstances like slavery and indenture and certain other factors having to do with the general outlines of the economic system which we have, have created a society in which it is very difficult for black people to make their way forward.

Now it seems to us then that if we are to deal with the questions of today, one of the considerations which we have to be very much concerned with is what precisely are we going to do to rehabilitate the black in the West Indies, and specifically in Trinidad and Tobago. What are we going to do to recreate in this society the possibility not only that black people but that people as a whole will be able to live and dwell together in unity as has so often and so emptily been said in anthems and so forth.

HOW PEOPLE LIVE

We believe in fact that there is very little need for any evidence whatever pertaining to the style of life and the differences in those life-styles which exist between whites and blacks in Trinidad and Tobago. It is very clear, for example, that people of black skin have an altogether different kind of experience from people who are not black. If we look around at the health system, if we look around at the educational system, if we look at the whole question of unemployment, we look, for example, at the way in which people obtain jobs, at the way in which people lose jobs; if we look, too, at the conditions in which people live, the conditions of housing and so on it becomes very clear to us that black people are having an altogether different and unfortunate experience. And this experience is all the worse because it is partnered by a similar experience of black people in other parts of the world, plus the fact that in Trinidad and Tobago, as elsewhere in the West Indies, we have a black government. Indeed, the particular bitterness which is associated with the notion of Black Power in the society today is a bitterness which derives very much from the fact that black people feel themselves to have been betrayed by other blacks. Black people feel in fact that what is most important about their situation today is that black people have abused the power which has been entrusted to them by blacks. They look around at their condition and they see, and it is not too difficult to look around and to take an objective stare and to see what precisely is happeining.

THE BLACK PROBLEM

In the West Indies, for example, in 1938, it was very clear that the most important problem in the society was already a problem involving black people. W.M. Mac Millan who came to the West Indies in 1937 and foretold the revolution and the riots which took place in that period, 1937/38, made bold to say that, "A social and economic study of the West Indies is necessarily a study of poverty". Not only was it a study of poverty, my friends, it was a study of black poverty and he added "the landless proletariat of casual workers left stranded by the gradual decline of the sugar industry which brought them there is the distinctive West Indian problem".

Now this was thirty years ago and the distinctive West Indian problem in the West Indies today is still a problem of this landless black mass, of this, in fact, property-less mass, and more and more a black mass of people who are today very largely unemployed in the West Indies. It was already very clear in 1937, that the living conditions which the common people experienced were living conditions which one could only regard as being consistent with the general benighted situation of black people in the West Indies. And I am sure that the anger of Black Power today derives from the fact that not only is John John still very much as it was in 1937 or that Shanty Town is still very much as it was in 1956 but also from

the fact that these conditions and this state of affairs were very clearly recognised by people who looked at those conditions openly and sensibly in 1937 and again in 1956

NEGROES

It was very clear, for example, that already in 1937, and already in 1956, the situation attaching to black people was a very difficult situation in the West Indies. And in Trinidad and Tobago several people have recorded the objective evidence needed to recognize the outlines of that situation. The history books are filled with such evidence. The political speeches are filled with such evidence. In fact in 1956 there is a remarkable description of John John and Shanty Town given by the Prime Minister who was then lecturing to the people and talking about the economic problems of Trinidad and Tobago in which he described John John and Shanty Town as "two grisly monuments to a policy of inaction, two menaces to our community health daily increasing in gravity, two condemnations of our transition to self-government". And he continued "If slaves lived there I could understand it. If we deprive their inhabitants of the vote, I could understand it. But these people are free men and women who have the vote, who have ministers now to take care of their needs instead of a crown colony government!". As luck would have it, that same gentleman acquired power and today in 1970 despite the acquisition of power by the person who penned those words in 1956 the state of black people in the society is very much the same.

EAST INDIANS

Also, if the Foster report is true, then we have, too, to wonder about the general conditions of health, the general nutritional conditions in respect to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. In 1937, one of the doctors who testified to the Foster Commission was reported to have remarked that although he had had twenty years' experience in the Dutch East Indies and although he had personal knowledge of conditions resulting from vitamin deficiencies he had never seen such distressing conditions as existed here between the East Indian labouring population where both men and women suffered badly from an absence of all the known vitamins. I think it is useful to reflect on the fact that today with rising prices in Trinidad and Tobago particularly with respect to essential foods it might very well be true that the vitamin deficiencies which prevailed in 1937 in respect of the East Indian population might also be prevailing in respect of the entire labouring society of Trinidad and Tobago.

HOUSING

The existence of bad conditions among the poor is emphasized when one looks for example at the housing situation in Trinidad and Tobago. The people in Trinidad and Tobago, in a country which is admittedly a black country, today live in conditions which are distressly poor. In so far as housing is concerned, of the 210,800 units existing in Trinidad in 1966, 73,100 of them were described as fair and poor. In fact 67,700 houses accommodating 240,400 persons in Trinidad and Tobago had shared toilets; 4,400 of these houses had no toilets at all and catered for 14,800 persons. Eighteen hundred houses with 7,900 persons living in those houses were dependent on rain for water; 13,700 houses with 62,100 persons were dependent on streams, springs and ponds. There were 64,300 houses which were lit by kerosene, 6,800 other houses which were lit by candle. In addition to this, there were very clear signs of overcrowding. The average number of persons per household in 15,600 houses was well over ten persons per household. In fact in 15,600 houses in Trinidad and accommodating more than ten persons per house there were 193,000 persons living.

HEALTH

In respect of health the prospect is very much the same. The people of Trinidad and Tobago are still without a proper health service. There is no obvious improvement in the health service which we have today over the health service which we had in the colonial era. We are still in need, for example, of a proper set of rural health services, particularly in respect of buildings, staff and medicines. Also we are still very much in need of a proper diagnostic service for early detection of cancer plus a better and a prompt treatment service for people with cancer, especially women. Also it is clear that the supply of drugs is one of the most outstanding inadequacies of the health system in Trinidad and Tobago. Not only is this so in the peripheral health services out in the country but also in those areas in the city in the major health institutions, in which it is often very difficult for someone to go along and to be adequately and properly treated, not only being examined by a doctor but also receiving the drugs that he needs. It may be surprising to hear that we also have a National Health Scheme, or a proposed National Health Scheme. An examination of this health scheme indicates that its proposals are mainly administrative, that it provides for no real service for the people and that in any case it has been on the drawing board for many years.

In Trinidad and Tobago since 1956 in fact not one new hospital has been built. The last new hospital in Trinidad was built before 1956 and is the hospital at Sangre Grande. Since then there have been a fair number of extensions but no real improvement in the hospital accommodation in Trinidad and Tobago. The Third Five-Year Development Plan makes a point which I think it is important for us to follow, because the Third Five-Year Development Plan boasts that the main causes of death in Trinidad and Tobago are more or less those causes found in the advanced countries. They are those connected with the heart and with the development of arterio-vascular diseases, cancer and childbirth. In other words, the claim of the Third Five-Year Development Plan is somewhat in the direction of saying that the experience of the ordinary people of this country is a far better experience than it used to be in the old days; that if they die from cancer, if they die from childbirth, if they die from heart disease, then they are succumbing to these diseases because they are living pretty well, because that is the conclusion that one is expected to draw about diseases like heart disease and cancer in respect of the reference made to the more developed countries of the world.

The fact is that in Trinidad and Tobago this may be so, that is, that people may be dying from diseases like heart disease and so on, but the reasons why they are dying from these diseases are completely different from the reasons which can be advanced in respect of the developed countries. In fact one of the killer diseases in Trinidad and Tobago is nephritis which is an acute infection of the kidneys, and heart disease is, together with nephritis, one of the scourges of the lower income groups and that condition can be directly attributed to the [illegible] of organisms in defective water [illegible] not to speak of the general [illegible] and nutritional standards. In fact [illegible] informed that the two biggest [illegible] in the entire world of nephritis [illegible] demic scale took place in this [illegible] in Trinidad and Tobago - within the [illegible] years.

EDUCATION

In the field of education, we [illegible] ness the same distressing situation [illegible] the general population. In education [illegible] national tale is a tale of insufficient [illegible] places, of overcrowding, of inadequate [illegible] the school curriculum. In government [illegible] assisted primary and intermediate [illegible] for example, between 1966 and 19[illegible] Port of Spain in every school, there [illegible] on average an attendance of 118 pupils [illegible] every 100 school places available, in [illegible] of San Fernando the attendance on an [illegible] was 133 pupils to every 100 places avail[illegible] in the county of St. George, the figure [illegible] the region of 114; in Caroni in the region [illegible] 120. In Nariva/Mayaro it was in the region [illegible] 114 and so on. And we can go all down [illegible] line and see, not only in respect of the [illegible] vate schools, but also in respect of the [illegible] dary schools, a woeful tale of overcrowding [illegible] And of course we must remember that [illegible] problem of unemployment with which [illegible] are faced is a problem which is as much [illegible] to the fact that the education system [illegible] levant as it is due to anything else.

PRISONS

We can also look at the state of [illegible] prisons. My information is, speaking [illegible] some of the people who have been arrested [illegible] during the Black Power demonstrations [illegible] that the cells in Trinidad and Tobago [illegible] sons are as filthy and as stinking as they [illegible] were. In fact they remind me very much [illegible] cording to the descriptions I have heard [illegible] the cells which prevailed in Trinidad and To[illegible] bago during the era of slavery. And the [illegible] cells were as they were precisely because [illegible] ple who lived in conditions of slavery [illegible] expected to use them and they reflect [illegible] sense the same discrimination against [illegible] and the same privilege for whites as the [illegible] son system today reflects. It is not impossible, for example, to feel that the prison system today reflects the discrimination and the general sociological bias against blacks in our society. After all, if only people who are generally from the low income groups, if only people who are generally from the despised groups, from the discriminated groups, go into prisons, what reason is there for spending money on cleaning them?

WARD 14

I have at this point to make reference to a description of one aspect the prison system which was given by the Darby Commission in 1965 and which in fact made specific reference to a hell hole used for observation of mentally ill prisoners in the general hospital. This hell hole went by the name of Ward 14 and Ward 14 was described by the Darby Commission as "an old building detached from the rest of the hospital, divided into eight individual rooms, four male four female". The accommodation was described as "totally unsuited for the purpose it was intended to serve; none of the rooms met any of the requirements of health, particularly in relation to the cubic content of air, lighting, eating, ventilation or minimum furnishings. A psychiatric authority has

ed that he would be unwilling to carry out observations therein because it was not possible to do so. It would be fair to say that any person, not of unsound mind when confined to one of these rooms, could become unstable within a few days. The accommodation would be considered most unsuitable even as punishment cells in a penal institution". And that was, my friends, in 1965, the year of the I.S.A., the state of the observation ward for the mentally ill prisoner at the General Hospital.

EVERYWHERE

And there are all sorts of stories that one can get in and around the country travelling about, particularly in the rural areas and particularly in the agricultural districts which reflect the state of the population in our country today. For example, I have encountered people at Sangre Grande, in the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla - the constituency of the Minister of Agriculture - who have told me that their average wage per day, when they are lucky enough to get it, is $2.56. I have also met persons, particularly in the sugar districts, whose experiences of life in this country are very trying indeed. One man informed me that he has tried to beat the 6 months-on-6 months-off cycle of employment and unemployment in the sugar areas by getting up at 3 o'clock in the morning in the crop season and working a 15-hour day. Another one informed me that after working 23 years in the sugar industry - 15 years as a regular - he got one day's work between September 25th and Christmas last year. And another after 51 years' service was given a pension of $20 per month. Yet another with over 50 years' service got a lump sum of $85.29 and no pension. A man who retired as a locomotive driver after 32 years' service got a pension of $29.50 per month. So that all in all it is clear that the situation in Trinidad and Tobago today is a situation which is characterised by a great deal of oppression and a great deal of unhappiness among ordinary black people of Indian and Negro descent.

THE MASS MOVEMENT

We must be very much concerned with this situation because all the problems which we have been talking about are problems which in particular afflict blacks. And we of the United National Independence Party are not at all different from those people in this society who are saying that one of the important needs of the day is to draw specific attention to the plight of black people and to decide what is to be done. We are very much concerned, though, that there are people in this country who believe that the problems which afflict us are likely to be solved much too easily. It is true that a mass movement has developed in our society. It is also true, however, that a mass movement goes through several phases. In the very first place, I believe that a mass movement goes through a phase when it is not "mass" at all. In fact I believe as an individual, I believe as a member of the United National Independence Party and as someone who has been associated with the development of the newspaper MOKO from its very inception that we have had an important role in laying the foundations as it were, the ideological foundations, for the development of a Black Power movement in this society. I have no doubt at all that our concerns are very much like the concerns of the people who today are talking about Black Power, but I believe that we, perhaps much more clearly than some of these people, realise, that a mass movement has a beginning and a mass movement also has a particular development. A mass movement runs a particular course, and at some stage it is going to be necessary for people to sit back and reflect. It is not for me to say at what stage, it is for me merely to contribute to the dialogue which I believe the Black Power movement is itself conducting in this society though it is conducting it by different means. And it is for us to sit back and to wonder and to try to indicate the steps by which we believe the society in which we live can overcome and surmount the problems which it faces today.

WHAT TO DO?

The problems which our society faces today are problems which are due in large measure to blackness. They are, I reiterate, problems which are not due alone to blackness, but they are problems which to a large extent have their origin in the fact that black people have been discriminated against and are still being discriminated against. The question is, what do you do? Even a march, no matter how successful, and some time ago I wrote in our newspaper MOKO - as a matter of fact I think it was last year when I commented on the April 12th demonstration staged by the NJAC in the streets of Port of Spain, I commented that the most important stage for a demonstration is after the demonstration. In the course of the demonstration it is very easy for people to feel that much more is being accomplished than is in fact being accomplished. Do not take this as a criticism, however, of what has been accomplished so far. Take this nevertheless as an indication that demonstrations can accomplish one thing, something else has to accomplish a denouement. There must come a stage when people must realise as some must have already realised that men cannot live by marching alone, that men cannot live by demonstrations alone. And I must say quite clearly what I mean here because I do not want any of the newspapers to represent me as having said, for example, that there should be a halt to the Black Power demonstrations. I am indicating no such thing. I am indicating however, that there is a very clear responsibility on the part of all of us to understand what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago. And I have no doubt whatever that the mass movement which we are witnessing at the moment is a mass movement which will at some time have, as other mass movements have done, to deal with the problems of orgainsation, to deal with the problems of institutionalization and to deal with the problems of transferring into political power, into political programmes and into benefits for the people the emotion which is being generated at the moment.

GAINS AND LOSSES

It is not that I do not think that the emotion which is being generated has done us all a great good. I have no doubt in my mind that what has happened over the last few weeks in the society is something that we have needed for years in Trinidad and Tobago I have no doubt at all that one of the things that the Black Power demonstrations have done is to make possible in Trinidad and Tobago the enunciation of a programme for the reconstruction of this country much more radical than would have been possible without those demonstrations. I am not too sure, however, that the Black Power demonstrations are accomplishing some of the ideological objectives that the promoters of the movement themselves have set out to accomplish. I am not too sure, for example, that the movement is not still a minority movement in Trinidad and Tobago I am not too sure; for example, that the objective of Afro-Indian unity is being best served by those rumours of violence and those incidents of violence which continue to surround the movement, whether in fact they are perpetrated by the movement or not, I think I ought to say also that I have no doubt at all that, as many other people have said, in fact a lot of the violence which is being created, is being created by mischief makers who have every intention of seizing upon the current situation to prey upon and in fact to create further confusion and further difficulty.

My own feeling, however, is firmly this: we have to recognise that the advantages are very clearly matched by the disadvantages. I believe though that until we adopt a radical and very outstandingly different economic perspective, until we adopt a radical political perspective for Trinidad and Tobago, and until black men are able to stand with others shoulder to shoulder in this society and achieve true individual and national economic independence, that the occasions for demonstrations will continue to exist. I feel moreover that we have to make it quite clear that there are some of us who are not interested only in shouting and getting on as some of the audience are doing here but that there are some of us who are interested in talking about the future and about perspectives for the future. And before I am through this evening I will want to make very clear what some of my considerations and my Party's considerations are with respect to the future.

THE POLITICAL PARTY

I believe that there are very many areas that we have to look at. One of the areas that we have to look very closely at is the whole area of the political party's relationship with people and this is important if only because it is important to recognise that the political party has, in fact, usurped many of the rights of the people. It is not only in Trinidad and Tobago, it is in the world over that people have become aware of the fact that the political party as it is in the world of today has usurped them of many of their rights. If, for example, you look at the manifestoes of the PNM, you will see in fact that the PNM speaks very much as if the government is the party and the party is the government; or as if the state is the party and the party the state. And we ourselves fall into the same trap and we talk about them as if they are. And in fact the PNM today in talking about its relations with the people often does as if the political party is a political party which is something completely apart from the people and which tells the people what they must do and how to do it. So that in very large measure it is the political parties themselves that have brought the political party into disrepute.

I want now, if you will permit me, to take up this question of the political party which so many people seem to be concerned about. One of the very important questions raised by the current mood and the current demonstrations is the future of the political party. I think that this, too, we must face quite frankly, and head-on because the political party originated as an institution for the advancement of the interests of people and if today people, as evidenced by the Black Power movement and some of the rather vocal members in the crowd here, are denigrating the existence and denigrating the legitimacy of a political party or of political parties in general in Trinidad and Tobago or in the West Indies in general, it is important for us to examine the reasons why.

THE U.N.I.P.

I must make a point here though. The United National Independence Party has had nothing to do with bringing the political party system in Trinidad and Tobago into disrepute. On the other hand we feel very sure in our minds that to the extent that we recognise the problems of the political party and its relationships with the people and to the extent that we make serious attempts to try and deal with those problems to that extent we are making an important contribution to the development of politics in our society. It might be that at some stage we may decide that a political party is altogether an inconvenient and inappropriate form of organisation for politics in this country, but I am not sure that we can arrive at that stage without a great deal more dialogue than we have already had.

TRANSITIONAL STAGE

I think, too, that it is very important for us to recognise that in very many countries of the world for reasons quite different from our own the political party is under attack in the same way, and I have no doubt myself that we are moving through a transitional situation in which for some time we will have to undergo a recurrent series of questionings about the role of the political party and about the place of the political party not only here in Trinidad and Tobago, but in the whole of the West Indies. The problem is, however, that one doesn't solve problems about institutions as fundamental as political parties by simply getting up and saying, "away with them". One doesn't wish a political party out of existence because a political party has a very important function. All the people who are talking around here this evening and who are listening to me, if asked to indicate, for example, what their own conception of the solutions of our problems is likely to be will give as many different conceptions as there are people, so that in the first place a political party has to reckon with a diversity of opinion and the political party's business is to try to reconcile the diversity of opinions which exist between people and to try to collect and to make these things coherent and to bring them together in one articulate cohesive programme which people in a country could follow.

WORDS

I want also to be clear that people are sure that they are not talking simply about words. If people's objection is to the name, if people's objection to a political party is the word 'party', then we have nothing whatever to discuss. Our problem is not a problem about words. We can quite easily change the word 'party' and talk about 'organisation or talk about 'congress'. In fact the political party which is today ruling in Guyana is called the People's National Congress. And you hear from time to time of parties like the Tanzania African National Union, or the Kenya African National Union or something of the kind. Now all these, irrespective of whether they are called unions, irrespective of whether they are simply called organisations or what have you, all these are in fact political parties. And one doesn't change the character of a political party by changing its name. One changes a political party by either changing its function or by finding a different way in which to do those functions. It may be for example that some of us have different ideas of how these functions are to be done. For example, I have here a quotation from a book entitled Perspectives and Proposals written by C.L.R. James in 1966 in which he spoke about the conception of the political party, and about the way in which the conception of the political party was changing, and he expressed the view that "the modern political party whatever its policy or programme, the moment it takes hold of any government whatever its democratic intentions becomes a system and a method and an organisation which is opposed to masses of the people. The only way you can look forward to that being changed is by a formation of independent councils everywhere".

INDEPENDENT COUNCILS

In that statement you not only have a description of the kind of dilemma in which political parties find themselves but you have at one and the same time a kind of prescription, an alternative. People may be talking in fact in terms of independent councils. People may be talking in fact of shifting the basis of political organisation from the geographical location as it is today, in that we talk about constituencies and so on, to an entirely different kind of organization which is actually based on other considerations. It seems to me that in terms of conception, it might well be that we have to consider very seriously an entirely different kind of political organisation. But the way in which we arrive at that political organisation is important, and we do not arrive at that political organisation by simply and completely abandoning what we have. A political institution as fundamental as a political party has to undergo a very precise and very deliberate transformation and if in fact we are headed in the way of a completely different kind of organisation, neither myself nor my party, both of us being already aware of the problems attaching to political parties in Trinidad and Tobago, will find it difficult to address ourselves very severely to the problem of reconstruction of political parties. In fact we have already begun to do so and we have found it necessary, and we have found it extremely necessary in our own constitution, to introduce measures which we think are in support of those solutions which we feel will deal with some of the problems which we recognise in the political party system as it exists today in our country.

OUR PROGRAMME

Now this brings me to the question of our programme. In talking about our programme I want to make one or two points. The fact is that we have not tried to indicate a very comprehensive or at least a total political programme. What we have been acting on is upon certain very severe and some very clear cut premise. We feel, for example, that the most important premise perhaps is that we must recognise the legitimacy of radical politics in Trinidad and Tobago today.

I have no doubt at all that all the discussions, even the discussions taking place here this evening with people shouting 'Power' and so on, that all of this would, in due course, help to resolve, in some way, the problems which we face and lead to the development of a kind of politics in our society in which people, as people, can participate in a greater degree. And I feel that one of the important things that we have to recognise is that we have to take the first few steps, even hesitant though they may be, as uncertain as they may be, in the direction of radical politics. It seems to me therefore that we have to envisage a particular kind of political and economic system. The kind of political and economic system that we have to envisage is a political system which is a fairly closed system, that is to say, that the free [enter]prise system as we know it in Trinidad [and] Tobago must surely go. We cannot have a [sys]tem which, under the guise of economic [and] mocracy, in fact gives unto the people of [Trin]idad and Tobago, the ordinary people of Trinidad and Tobago, a much worse [deal] than they have a right to expect. We [feel] that the political system and the economic system in Trinidad and Tobago must [move] way to a fairly well developed kind of [socia]lation. We feel, too, that we must make [specific] specific attempts to induce West Indian [partic]ipation on a much more serious level. [Real] local participation and popular participation in the economic system must also be in[duced].

And we think too that we have to rationalise our relationship with Third World countries. Too many of our economic relationships, relationships between the United States, United Kingdom and Canada and ours[elves]. We have to alter that emphasis and to [move] more purposefully in the direction of [our] tionships with the Third World countries.

In addition to this it seems to me that we have to recognise that if as we say the conditions of black people in Trinidad and Tobago are such that black people have a right to feel themselves put upon and discriminated against then we cannot now simply aim at equality for black people. As Mr. Gardiner has pointed out in talking about the problems in Africa as he saw them in 1966 the problem in Trinidad and Tobago is also a problem of devising policies which not merely aim to treat equally those people who have been put upon and discriminated against in the past. What we have to do is to introduce policies which are especially directed in favour of developing advantages for those people who because of the inequalities of the past are where they are today. To treat them with equality is, as Gardiner has argued, to perpetuate inequality; and so we feel that we have to make specific moves in the direction of designated industries as well as taking very special steps to induce trained personnel, many of them from the less fortunate sections of society to operate in areas where they have not been accustomed to operate, for example, like in agriculture.

EDUCATION

Our programme falls into four parts. The two other aspects, housing and land have already been presented by the Party Chairman. In the first place we are very much concerned with education because we believe that the problem of education is very closely related to the problem of unemployment. An our most important innovation in this area should be to introduce into the economic and social system a kind of general apprenticeship between the ages of 13 and 24. This will have the effect of giving every youth between those ages a skill which will earn him employment when he comes out of school or when he comes out of the training college or whatever he happens to be in - be it the technical school, college or what have you. It is clear to us that one of the important causes of unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago is that when people come out of the educational institutions into which they go they have no guarantee of a job and many of them have no particular skills whatever by which they can obtain gainful employment for themselves.

AGRICULTURE

We feel too that in respect of agriculture it is imperative that we undertake the establishment of local ownership and control over the sugar-industry. This is the most im[portant decision which can be] [respect of the agricultural] [ion to this, though, we feel] [number of important tasks] [undertake. We must for exa]mple note economic enterprises [which the ownership will] [agricultural workers in the] must also look forward to [of a great deal more expo]sure as an alternative to [port of primary produce.] [of agriculture on a West] [lso be seriously undertak]en.

PETROLE

In so far as petrole[um] United National Indepe[ndence Party] [nises that it is in the in]terest and it is the people's ri[ght to] [ablish ownership and] [roleum industry and] Independence Party co[mmits] [ing towards that end.] [celerate the training an]d personnel into the mos[t] [tive areas of industry,] respect of exploration, [level management. We] [sole responsibility for] [tion and marketing of] [leum products shoul]d [tional oil company] [culture an urgent ne]ed [zation on a West In]dies [to make possible a W]est [dustry with a petro-] [ducing household pl]astics.

UNEMPL

In respect of u[nemployment] [number of funda]mental [make. In the first] [ight of our citizens] [loyment. We abhor] [loyment prevailing] [ast decade particula]rly [ve are of the opini]on [most fundamental] [seful and permane]nt [em of unemployme]nt [hat our proposals] [respect of housin]g [cation, will generate] [nities for the unemp]loyment.

In addition, [we think] of all to bring c[ontrol] greater control and [supervision] legislation, with [adequate] funds available fo[r housing.] Secondly we prop[ose to make] viable and profit[able] for participation [by] businessmen, the [Government] crease and spre[ad] skills in the soci[ety] establish a realis[tic] system whereby [no] leaving age will [have] education which [is] ly employable [and] pose to embark [on] ing programme [of] from parents w[ho] case will a child[ren] he deserves. A[nd] embark upon [a] the health ser[vice] ing an adequa[te] be financed p[ublic] payments fro[m] sons with exp[erience]

PAUL HERBERT

portant decision which can be taken today in respect of the agricultural system. In addition to this, though, we feel that there are a number of important tasks which we must undertake. We must for example seek to promote economic enterprises in agriculture in which the ownership will be invested in the agricultural workers in the country and we must also look forward to the development of a great deal more export crops or a great deal more of secondary industries in agriculture as an alternative to the traditional export of primary produce. The rationalization of agriculture on a West Indian basis must also be seriously undertaken.

PETROLEUM

In so far as petroleum is concerned the United National Independence Party recognises that it is in the interest of the people, and it is the people's right, ultimately to establish ownership and control over the petroleum industry and the United National Independence Party commits itself to working towards that end. We hope, too, to accelerate the training and absorption of local personnel into the most important and sensitive areas of industry, as for example, in respect of exploration, marketing and top level management. We propose, too, that the sole responsibility for the internal distribution and marketing of petroleum and petroleum products should be vested in the national oil company In petroleum as in agriculture an urgent need exists for rationalization on a West Indian basis particularly to make possible a West Indian petroleum industry with a petro-chemical complex producing household plastics and synthetic fibres.

UNEMPLOYMENT

In respect of unemployment we have a number of fundamental propositions to make. In the first place we recognise the right of our citizens to full and gainful employment. We abhor the high level of unemployment prevailing in the society over the last decade particularly among the youth and we are of the opinion that nothing but the most fundamental approaches can offer a useful and permanent solution to this problem of unemployment. We anticipate, too, that our proposals in respect of agriculture, in respect of housing, of petroleum, of education, will generate new jobs and opportunities for the unemployed.

In addition, however, we propose first of all to bring commercial banking under greater control and direction by appropriate legislation, with a view to making more funds available for development purposes. Secondly we propose to designate specially viable and profitable economic enterprises for participation by small and medium-sized businessmen, the aim being to provide the increase and spread of vital entrepreneurial skills in the society. Thirdly we propose to establish a realistic and relevant education system whereby all young persons of school leaving age will have been provided with an education which will render them immediately employable in our society. Also we propose to embark on a massive school building programme which will be financed partly from parents who can afford to pay. In no case will a child be deprived of the education he deserves. Also we propose that we should embark upon a programme of expansion of the health services with the object of creating an adequate national service which will be financed partly by the state and partly by payments from those who can afford. Persons with experience in the voluntary health services such as the Red Cross and the St. John's Ambulance Brigade will be absorbed into the health services at the appropriate levels.

A BETTER LIFE

Also we believe that there ought to be and we propose the provision of a wider range of public amenities, the aim being to humanise the living conditions of the population and to expand job opportunities.

In addition to this it seems to me that there are a number of other areas which we should cover. I feel myself, and I intend to take up this discussion within our party at all levels, that one of the things to which we should address ourselves is a general national youth service. Also, it seems that there are very clear signs that legislation will have to be used to regulate employment practices in Trinidad and Tobago; and we have, too, to look beyond employment. Employment looms as large as it does in Trinidad and Tobago today because so many people are unemployed; but one has to look beyond unemployment to the happiness of the people of our country after they are employed and one of the things that we have to do is to seek to develop specific projects which will themselves at the same time as they give employment to the unemployed also promote the long-term rehabilitation of the unemployed.

It seems sure, for example, that specific drainage projects could be undertaken in Nariva, Oropouche and Cocorite with workmen acquiring a stake in the long-term development of these developed areas. Also it is important that the human condition should be improved, that black people should be encouraged and be given the opportunities to become useful citizens, able to use their hands, able to use their brains and bodies. We call for a general cultural programme to make black people more aware of themselves as men and women and as people. The civil servants, the footballers, the cricketers, the artistes, the sculptors, the painters, pan men and all, should be retained on a large scale to teach the people of this country how to live and how to use their leisure time. Also it seems that there must be some agreementon a general political programme.

A POLITICAL PROGRAMME

I am not myself sure that the elements which in some degree are represented here this evening are the elements which have the continuing responsibility for the future direction of the Black Power movement. In relation to the direction of that movement and in relation to our general direction, I want to urge that our society should undertake by very deliberate means the development of a composite political movement including those persons of all outlooks who share the determination to introduce into this country a new government as the essential prelude to a new political system and a new society in general. I also want to indicate that we can do this only by creating out of the present movements in the country a general national crusade which will have the effect of developing not only a limited mass movement of protest, but will also have the effect of developing a wide ranging comprehensive mass crusade of the people for the purposes of developing a better Trinidad and Tobago. In any attempt to do this, the United National Independence Party will be more than willing to play its part. In fact we believe that we have already contributed a great degree to the general enunciation of the path which we should follow as a people and as a nation and in future talks about the country we will continue this dialogue. We feel that we have a right at this time to come to the people and to indicate very clearly with the greatest sincerity at our command, with the greatest insight, what we believe to be the problems in Trinidad and Tobago and what we believe to be the solutions to those problems. Of course we recognize also and we know that the people have the right to act in the pursuance of their own interests as far as they see fit. We believe though that in so far as a political party is concerned our constituency must be a constituency which is wider than only black people. Nothing that I have said this evening must be taken to indicate that we feel in any way that whites and non-blacks in general have no right in this society. We feel that this society can only move forward on the basis of unity, unity which will establish the national independence of our society on the basis of the genuine and dignified individual independence of us all.

I look forward to future meetings when again we will have the opportunity of discussing some of the more important aspects of the problems which we have discussed this evening and I look forward too to those days when we will be able to meet in greater calm and in greater deliberation, not only to discuss those problems but to implement many of the solutions that we have discussed here and to create a fuller and more bountiful life for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Never as today have the masses shown such willingness to struggle and work